A VISIT TO THE PRESIDENT

By BRUCE BARTON

AS most of you who read this magazine could not go to see the President and Mr. Hughes for yourselves, I went down and looked them over for you. This article is frankly friendly to the President. Next week I shall publish an article which will be frankly friendly to Mr. Hughes. I am trying to give facts, not arguments—letting each candidate put his best foot forward and be presented as he would like to present himself if he could call at your homes.

THE EDITOR.

I FIRST met President Wilson while I was in college. There was a conference of undergraduates at Hartford, and President Wilson, then of Princeton, was present and spoke on the claims of the ministry on the college man. One sentence in that address I have never forgotten. Said he:

"I am constantly amazed by young men who come to me for advice about entering the ministry and who talk to me about wanting to *do* something when they ought to talk to me about wanting to *be* something."

There was an English clergyman present, who, when Mr. Wilson had finished, expressed his delight and surprise that the president of a great university should publicly proclaim his interest in religion and religious work. In England, he said, no university president would have dared to make such a speech. To Mr. Wilson and to us who heard him it seemed the perfectly natural thing that a man intrusted with the education of young men should have a thoroughgoing religious faith and publicly avow it.

The last time I saw the President was in his office in the White House on a warm day in early August. He was clothed in white from head to foot—necktie, shoes, socks, all white. Not for a long time has any President been kept so constantly on the job in Washington through the terrible summer months, and he has learned how to take care of his comfort. Beside the big desk loaded with bills awaiting his signature, we sat and talked for half an hour. And I thought, as we talked, that perhaps in the big chair where I was sitting Mr. von Bernstorff had sat on one occasion, and Senator Stone on another, and the representative of Carranza on another. And I wondered what tales that chair might tell, if it could.

It is interesting to note that both the President and Mr. Hughes have found it necessary to protest to the world that they are not cold, not merely intellects devoid of emotion, but really very warm, very friendly, very human sort of folks. One who has talked with them both, as I have, when they knew they were not talking for publication and could therefore drop into the vernacular without being publicly punished, finds it very easy to take both men at their own estimate in this particular. It seemed to me that both of them have mellowed with the years. The President is grayer; there are deeper lines in his face: but his smile is ready and unforced, and he tells a funny story so that it is really funny, and laughs in a way to leave no doubt that his digestion is in first-class shape. Both he and Mr. Hughes have the appearance of being physically fit.

At thirty he was so frail that a half hour lecture left him completely tired out: at sixty he is asking for another four years of the most laborious job in the world. And how laborious it is! Little by little we are forming the habit of looking to the President for attention to every conceivable sort of problem. Do the sharks annoy our bathers? Telegraph the President and ask for life-savers. Is there a garment strike? Ask the President to arbitrate. Are the mosquitos unusually pestiferous? Washington should attend to it. I sometimes wonder whether the time will come when the Presidency will be too big a job for any one human being; whether it is possible for men to build a machine so huge and exacting that no man can drive it.

That the President, who at thirty was almost an invalid, should have come through these past four years so well, speaks much for the painstaking self-mastery of the years between thirty and sixty. Let us take a hop skip, and jump over those years.

Photograph by Brown Brothers. 9

"I tremble to think of the variety and falseness of impressions I make: it is borne in on me so that it may change my very disposition."

WOODROW WILSON was born in Staunton, Virginia, December 28, 1856, the son of a two-fisted, hard-hitting Presbyterian preacher and a quiet, book-loving woman of unusual charm. One who studies his career may see in him the father and the mother well blended—the ready expression and willingness to face a fight of the one, and the love of seclusion among his books which is the gift of the other. The family moved very early to Augusta, Georgia; and the boy's first vivid recollection is of some one crying in the streets of that little city: "Lincoln has been nominated, and there will be war."

He was rather a delicate boy, and it was not until he had reached his ninth year that his parents allowed him to learn to read. After that his education took him in regular stages through the schools of Augusta and on to Princeton University. He played some baseball there, did a lot of debating, and graduated with honors. It was while he was there that he got hold of the files of an old English magazine containing reports of the debates in Parliament during the days when Parliament was full of giants. And there began to be formed in him even then the interest in politics that has been constant throughout his life, and the ambition some day to have a political career.

Years later, when he came back to Princeton as a professor, his course in practical politics was voted the most popular course in college. He dealt with all kinds of politics, but particularly the politics of the day, handling men and affairs at Washington and Trenton and Albany without gloves. There were always a number of men in his classes who made a part of their college expenses by writing for the daily papers, and to them he would say at the beginning of the term:

"Now I am going to speak very frankly about a lot of things that would make very good news stories if they ever leaked out. I have got to put you fellows on your honor to see that they do not leak out. If they *do*, if you should forget yourselves, there will be no punishment for you except this—I shall have to cut all the really interesting parts of my lectures out. I shall have to make the course just dull and uninteresting."

In all the years no student reporter ever forgot himself.

After his graduation from college Mr. Wilson went back home and took up the practice of law, because it seemed the most direct way into politics. But his heart was not in it: he got tired of sitting around his office waiting for clients, and spent most of his first year at work on his book on Congressional Government. At the end of a year he went to Johns Hopkins to fit himself for teaching.

At forty-five he became president of Princeton University, the first layman to hold that position. At fifty-four he was elected Governor of New Jersey.

The Democratic party in New Jersey at that time was about as prosperous as the Republican party in Texas. It had been out of power for seventeen years, and jolly well deserved to be. The owners and controllers of the party, Messrs. Smith, Davis, and Nugent, decided in 1910 that with Wilson there was a chance to reseat the party in power. They succeeded in winning the election, but it was a costly victory. In winning with Wilson they destroyed themselves.

The blow fell first on Jim Smith, who, as ruling boss and the man chiefly responsible for Wilson's nomination, expected of course to go back to the United States Senate. The Governor served notice on him that he could not go, and forced the legislature to elect Martine in his place. Davis fell next, and finally Nugent, who came to the capitol to protest against the progressive legislation that Governor Wilson was forcing through.

"Don't you think you are making a mistake in opposing these measures, Mr. Nugent?" asked the Governor very suavely.

"I do not," replied Nugent with no suaveness